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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 001310

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

AF FOR DAS T. WOODS  
AF/S FOR B. NEULING  
OVP FOR NULAND  
NSC FOR DNSA ABRAMS, SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE  
USDOC FOR ROBERT TELCHIN  
TREASURY FOR J. RALYEA  
PASS USTR FOR FLORIZELLE LISER  
STATE PASS USAID FOR MARJORIE COPSON  
USDOL FOR ROBERT YOUNG  
USMISSION GENEVA FOR JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ELAB](#) [PHUM](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE: 2005 UPDATE OF WORST FORMS OF CHILD LABOR

REF: SECSTATE 143552

1. (SBU) Summary. The GOZ made no changes to child labor laws or regulations in the past year. The ongoing economic and social crisis in Zimbabwe impedes additional efforts to address child labor problems. The country's high HIV infection rate continues to contribute to the number of child-headed households. The GOZ's capacity to finance social spending is contracting sharply. While the humanitarian consequences of Operation Restore Order are clearly enormous, a conclusive assessment of its effect on child labor is not yet available. A recently completed rapid assessment of Operation Restore Order (septel) found a school dropout rate of 22 percent due to the operation and 40 percent of surveyed households experienced some separation of family members. These disruptions to family life increase the likelihood of exploitative forms of child labor, but we are unaware of specific evidence at this time that the incidence of the worst forms of child labor is increasing. End Summary

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Child Labor Laws Unchanged, Safety Net Inadequate  
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2. (SBU) There were no changes to Zimbabwe's child labor laws or enforcement mechanisms in the past year.

3. (SBU) The Ministry of Public Service, Labor, and Social Welfare continues to provide school fees and books through its Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) and Children in Difficult Circumstances (CDC) programs for children unable to afford them. President Mugabe announced at the national launch of Zimbabwe's Millennium Development Goals (MDG) 2004 Progress Report on September 8 that BEAM provided school fee assistance to over 800,000 vulnerable children. The quickening pace of economic deterioration, however, has significantly eroded the GOZ's capacity to fund assistance at a time of sharply rising demands on social spending. (N.B. The IMF projects a widening of the budget deficit in 2005 to 11.3 percent of GDP from 3 percent in 2004.) Illustrative of the fiscal crisis, resource constraints have held up release of a child labor survey completed by the GOZ in December 2004.

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No Comprehensive Policy  
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4. (SBU) We are unaware of any evidence of significantly increased incidence of the worst forms of child labor in the country. NGOs consulted for last year's report indicated that the patterns and concerns identified last year remain and that they have undertaken no new programs in this area. Representatives of labor, employers, and the GOZ recognize the need to eliminate the worst forms of child labor but, absorbed with other aspects of Zimbabwe's multi-faceted crises, they have not collaborated on a comprehensive policy to address the problem. UNICEF's State of The World's Children 2005 Report noted that 26 percent of Zimbabwe's children aged 5-14 were engaged in some type of work before the GOZ undertook Operation Restore Order.

5. (SBU) Conclusive assessments of the effects of Operation Restore Order on child labor have yet to be done, but the Operation has certainly exacerbated conditions that would impel child labor. UN Special Envoy Anna Tibaijuka reported in July that the government destroyed the homes and livelihoods of approximately 700,000 people with another 2.4 million indirectly affected. According to ActionAid International's Zimbabwe Demolitions report in August

(septel), 70 percent of respondents lost their shelters and 76 percent lost their livelihoods. ActionAid,s report also stated that the 1.5 million child orphans in the country were now more exposed to crime, prostitution, and mass poverty due to the loss of access to school, shelter, and social safety nets. The report found that the operation resulted in 22 percent of children dropping out of school with another 44 percent potentially lacking resources for school fees. The report also found that 40 percent of surveyed households had experienced some separation of family members, a disruption that increases the likelihood of exploitative forms of child labor.

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